DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 174 389 RC 011 594

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TITLE How to Set Up a Resource Center to be Compatible with an Outdoor Program.
PUB DATE 22 Aug 79
NOTE 9p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Design; Experiential Learning; *Facility Planning; Facility Requirements; Information Centers; Instructional Materials; *Instructional Materials Centers; Material Development; *Nature Centers; *Outdoor Education; *Resource Centers; Resource Materials
IDENTIFIERS *Laredo Taft Field Campus IL

ABSTRACT

A materials collection can provide indirect experiences that will supplement the direct learning experiences offered by an outdoor education nature center. The Instructional Materials Center at Laredo Taft Field Campus provides such multiple learning experiences as it offers print media as well as slides, films, tapes, and projection and field equipment. The center serves a clientele ranging from school children to university faculty. All grade levels of materials at Taft feature a concentration of information on natural science, environmental/energy awareness, conservation, camping, and education, particularly outdoor education. The areas of folklore, American Indians, arts and crafts and prairie preservation also receive emphasis to a somewhat lesser degree. Organization of an outdoor education resource center should include: (1) location in a centrally situated room; (2) like items placed together, e.g. field equipment on a peg board, media with media; (3) pamphlets and brochures placed in file folders organized by subject; (4) index cards on all materials in the center. Sources for collection materials include government and professional organizations, publisher's catalogs, and bookstore inventory lists. The focus of the collection should remain directed toward the needs of the center's program so that the indoor instruction materials will coordinate and support the lessons to be learned from the outdoor resources. (DS)

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rec 10-09-79

ED174389

HOW TO SET UP A RESOURCE CENTER TO BE COMPATIBLE WITH AN OUTDOOR PROGRAM

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August 22, 1979

RC 011594

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

HOW TO SET UP A RESOURCE CENTER TO BE COMPATIBLE WITH AN OUTDOOR PROGRAM

by Jan Stilson

Tell an outdoor educator that outdoor education means throwing the books out the door, and that person, with some astonishment, will immediately swing into an impromtu lecture on the compatibility of the outdoor classroom with materials commonly used indoors.

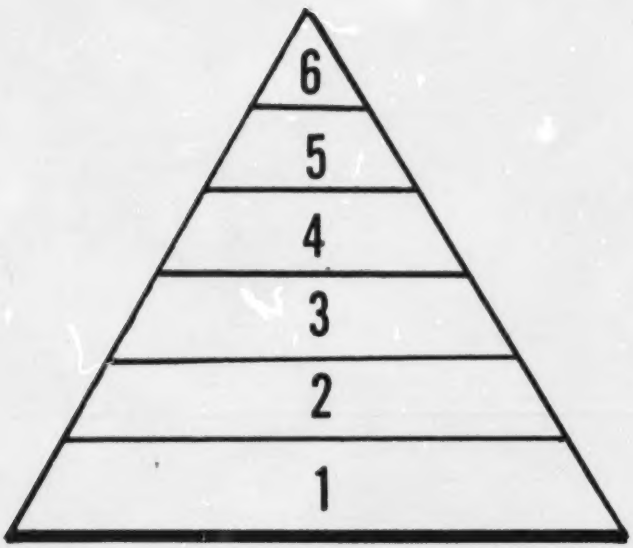
Such was my experience recently, and it set me to musing on the importance of a materials collection--print and non-print--to the outdoor education/nature center. Most educators and librarians know that the best method for learning and retaining new information, is by direct experience. See Figure 1. Those who don't learn from direct experience (not everyone climbs a mountain), learn about the subject (mountain climbing) by indirect experience derived from movies, pictures, and books. There should not be a dichotomy here; people learn by experiential education and vicarious experience. There must be input from multiple sources for meaningful learning to happen. An outdoor program is compatible with an indoor library because together they open the door to multiple learning experiences. Together, they are a supportive unit.

LORADO TAFT INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS CENTER

A MODEL

It was a new experience for me to begin working in an instructional materials center which specializes in outdoor learning. In an average day at Lorado Taft Field Campus, a branch of Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois, the patrons spend more time outdoors than indoors. When patrons are in the library, most often it seems they are just "passing through". Around 200 people use the facility on a weekly basis, generating a circulation of 1,000-2,000 pieces of material. The Instructional Materials Center (IMC) is more than a library because it houses more than books.

CONE OF EXPERIENCE



1. Direct, purposeful experience which includes participation
2. Observed experiences, i.e., viewing demonstrations
3. Models and contrived experiences, i.e., displays
4. Audio - visual aids, i.e., sound movies
5. Visual aids or audio aids, i.e., flat pictures, tapes
6. Learning through symbols, i.e. words, figures

Figure 1. The broad base of the pyramid illustrates one's exposure to experiential learning. Five-sixths of the peak illustrates indirect learning. One without the other presents an incomplete learning experience. (Adapted from Dale's Cone of Experience)

In addition to all kinds of print materials, there is a diverse collection of hardware such as projectors, cameras, field equipment, dry press and tape recorders. Software includes those items used with the hardware—films, slides, tapes, etc.

The outdoor program at Taft Campus is designed to reach two main groups: 1) The university, including the faculty and graduate students in the Outdoor Teacher Education program, and juniors and seniors from Elementary Education/Physical Education and 2) The public schools, which include teachers and elementary/junior high students. An additional category of patrons would be private groups, usually adults, who contract to use the campus on weekends. Each of these different groups have different needs in the IMC. Juniors and seniors from NIU majoring in education, commute to Taft from the main campus, 37 miles east. Juniors, working with Taft's resident Graduate Teaching Assistants, receive introductory instruction in outdoor education, and become acquainted with the literature of the field. They learn proper use of binoculars, compasses, and other pieces of field equipment. Square dancing after supper provides a time of relaxation and fun while teaching social skills. These activities prepare the juniors for their senior experience in which they become the teachers of resident childrens' groups. Seniors write lesson plans, choose the equipment and materials they need, and lead their groups in a direct outdoor learning experience. The IMC is a vital center of their activities.

The groups from the public schools also receive direct benefits from using the IMC. It is the first time some children have seen a specialized library which contains neat things like skeletons, fossils, binoculars, Ranger Rick, and Mickey Mouse Comic Books that discuss energy conservation in an entertaining manner! Often when they have free time, the children come back to browse and check out materials for the duration of their stay. Teachers check out story books for use at bedtime to "settle" the kids for sleep. Having early experiences with a fascinating library can be a most forceful lesson in teaching a child about the rewards of using a resource center for instruction and enjoyment.

The nature of the instructional program, and the diversity of the needs of the patrons of an outdoor education center is the mandate for determining the type and content of the materials to be collected.

In all grade levels of materials at Taft, there is a concentration in the areas of natural science, environmental/energy awareness, conservation, camping, and education--particularly outdoor education. To a lesser degree, the areas of folklore, American Indians, arts and crafts, and prairie preservation are emphasized. There is a small archival collection of photos of Lorado Taft, the sculptor who created the monolithic Blackhawk statue overlooking the scenic Rock River--hunting ground of the Sac and Fox Indians.

Taft IMC houses a unique collection of research material: a dissertation collection of over 500 titles specialized in the areas of interest to the outdoor/environmental educator. This special collection is growing every year in size and generally good reputation. Scholars from all over the U.S. and Canada are frequently drawn to Taft because of the unique opportunities for research. Dissertations in Eco-Education with Supplement, a bibliography by Malcolm Swan, is available upon request for .25. Price subject to change. Write Lorado Taft Field Campus, Box 299, Oregon, Il. 61061.

A microfiche collection of ERIC materials includes more than 3,000 fiche as offered in Resources in Education (RIE), the index to the report literature in education. The clearinghouse for Outdoor Education is ERIC/CRESS (Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools), located in the New Mexico State University at Las Cruces, N.M. For further information, contact Ms. Judi Conrad, the Outdoor Education Information Specialist.

How To Organize a Small Resource Center

In most outdoor education centers, nature centers, camps and similar facilities, is a mottled collection of books and instructional "junk". These materials may be shoved to the corner of the office, used hardly at all, or they may take the form of an outdoor mini-library carted from station to station in a portable box for the purpose of identification of species. At the end of

the day, the "portable library" is a real backbreaker. It makes sense in either case, to organize the materials in a centrally located room which is large enough to accommodate a group of several people. Some advantages to such a collection are: 1) easy access to material frequently used 2) protects important materials from the weather 3) provides a hospitable place for groups to rest a moment before going on to the next outdoor activity 4) becomes a natural collection center for names and addresses, ideas, papers, pamphlets, models, crafts and what-have-you.

To staff the newly organized resource center, a volunteer who loves books and materials will do very nicely. Organizing a collection of materials need not be elaborate. 1) Like items go together--media with media, field equipment on a peg board, and all labeled for easy identification. 2) Start an index file on each piece of large equipment, assigning a number to each. For each item in the collection, a card in a visible file or a card catalog is a must. Users are able to find the item based on the number assigned to it and recorded on the card. 3) Put pamphlets and brochures into file folders and file them by subject. A corresponding subject card goes into a file box for each file folder. It isn't usually necessary or adviseable to have a file card for each pamphlet. 4) Books go on the shelf by subject for easy location. A small collection might be color-coded with tape while larger collections should be assigned numbers from the Dewey Decimal Classification system. One doesn't need to be a specialist to learn to use the Dewey Tables. An author card and a title card should be typed for each book in the collection.

Whether to pay or not to pay the help depends totally upon the strength of the budget at that point in the fiscal year, but it does suggest that monies must be allocated to the new resource center at some point in its growth. In addition to staff, there will be a need for new equipment and materials due to the obsolescence factor, and it will take some funds to stock the necessary supplies--index cards, file boxes, shelves, etc. Five hundred dollars will purchase lots of supplies and a few books, or between 50-60 books a year. Paperbacks are less costly, but wear out sooner.

An excellent collection can be gathered for very little money, but it takes some time, and requires cultivating a few contacts. Several tools can be very helpful in identifying the most valuable resource suppliers in the world of outdoor literature.

First, many publishing houses send out catalogs at regular intervals. Begin saving them, for when enough time has passed, those houses dealing in good outdoor-oriented materials will become evident. Discard the ones which do not apply.

Second, privately owned bookstores specializing in outdoor materials occasionally send out inventory lists. As sellers, these people are acquainted with the quality materials. Ask for advice. They can help a beginner sort through all the material which is interesting, but actually peripheral to the needs of the collection. Booksellers, Mr. and Mrs. Doug Wade, have been very helpful to Taft IMC, and can be contacted at Windrift Prairie Shop, North Daysville Road, Oregon, Il. 61061.

Third, professional and government organizations often provide free and low-cost information upon request. Some associations to contact include Sierra Club, National Wildlife Federation, American Camping Association, and the Audubon Society. Addresses can be found in the Encyclopedia of Associations available in most libraries.

Fourth, while in the library, ask the librarian which bibliographic tools he/she would recommend for use. He may know next to nothing about the outdoor/camping movement, but he should know the reference sources for learning a great deal about the field in a short time. Two reference books which can be enormously helpful in selecting specific titles for purchase are: Man and the Environment edited by Stapp and Liston, and the Chicorel Index to Environment and Ecology, Vol. 16, Marietta Chicorel, editor. Another tool which determines the availability of a book is Books In Print (BIP). In most cases, bookstores or libraries will have copies for public use, so that it will not be necessary to purchase a set for the developing nature library. The set includes six large volumes, two each for author, title, and subject areas. Each entry in a volume gives full bibliographic information on a title,

and lists the publishers' addresses at the back of one volume. This set is worth traveling several miles to examine. In the long run, it can be a great time saver.

Finally, experience is the best teacher, so to learn about developing a special collection of materials, begin collecting! Keep the focus of the collection upon the needs of the center's program so that over all, the indoor instructional materials coordinate and support the lessons to be learned from the outdoor resources.